This, our Seventh Anniversary Issue of the SEED POD, is affectionately dedicated to the memory of

NORMAN A. REASONER

HISTORICAL NOTES ON HIBISCUS

- GAST

The next variety to be pictured in color in the Botanical Cabinet (1824, Vol. 10) is called semi-double Rosa-Sinensis variegata, or variegated hibiscus. We still refer to this form as semi-double or as "Cup and Saucer". This, by the way, is my favorite flower form.

In Vol. 10 of the Botanical Register, 1836, another variety was introduced to English and American gardeners. Although the color plate has evidently faded with the years, this variety called "Single Flowered Chinese Rose Mallow" is close to what we call Mrs. Hassinger, a deep pink with a distinct, deep, reddish black center zone. It is very formal and regular in conformation, with only a slight trace of ruffle. But it is the text that which accompanied this plate that is of particular interest. It states: "The different varieties of the species, crimson, yellow, buff, and even white, are not uncommon in cultivation, but the single state (as is shown in the illustration) although handsome, is comparatively rare."

When considered with the fact that practically all of the early descriptions of hibiscus Rosa-Sinensis shows them to be double flowered, rather than single, this statement seems to correct the prevailing idea that the earliest hibiscus, as introduced from their native areas were singles, and that the singles were derived from the doubles since the species was brought into cultivation in Europe, America and Hawaii. This could still be true far back in botanical history, but so far as I know, there is no authoritative proof of this available.

Throughout the middle and late decades of the Eighteenth Century, most contemporary horticultural publications gave quite a bit of space to hibiscus, not only Rosa-Sinensis, but other species as well. Some of these were found to cross readily with Rosa-